

Christ - Debtor to the Whole Law

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Everything our Saviour did as a man he did 'according to the law'. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save his people from their sins, he willingly put himself under the law and became voluntarily subject to the law in all things as a man. He did so because God cannot justify the guilty except upon the grounds of strict justice. Righteousness must be maintained and justice must be satisfied in the exercise of mercy, love, and grace. He who is our God and Saviour is 'a just God and a Saviour' (Isaiah 45:20). 'By mercy and truth iniquity is purged' (Proverbs 16:6).

Made Under The Law

Therefore, 'when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Galatians 4:4-5). Now, since his work is finished, since he has brought in an everlasting righteousness and made an end of sin for his elect, Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled. 'The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake', to justify us and forgive our sins. Our Redeemer has magnified the law and made it honourable (Isaiah 42:21). Though the yoke of the law was a heavy yoke, and only a shadow of good things to come, if we would have those good things, Christ must bear the law's heavy yoke for us. And he did it as our willing Substitute and Surety. Though the carnal ordinances of the law were what the Holy Spirit calls, 'weak and beggarly elements', and but the 'rudiments of the world', our Lord Jesus Christ submitted to all the ordinances and institutions of the law as a man, that he might fulfil the law for us and bring it to an honourable end.

The End Of The Law

Having fulfilled all the law in the room and stead of his people, 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth' (Romans 10:4). He is the end of the law in every sense of the word. He is the end of the law as its object. The law was given to point us to Christ, to shut us up to Christ. Now that Christ has come, the law has no other purpose. He fulfilled it. Christ is the end of the law's curse. The curse of the law was spent on our Substitute. Therefore, those who are redeemed by his blood have no fear of being cursed by the law (Galatians 3:13). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the law's power. Having slain our Substitute, all who are in him representatively are now dead to the law (Romans 7:4). He is also the end of the law's rule. Being made free from sin in Christ, all

believers are free from the law's rule. We are now ruled, motivated, and governed by the grace of God in Christ, not the law of God (Romans 6:14-15).

The Law Established By Faith

God's holy law requires from all men perfect righteousness and complete satisfaction. It will not bend. It will not accept sincerity, repentance, or the greatest, most costly sacrifices men can make. How, then, can fallen, guilty, depraved sinners meet the law's demands? How can we escape the wrath of God? There is only one way—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Our faith in Christ does not satisfy the law's demands; but Christ, the Object of our faith, does. Thus, when sinners, who can never meet the law's demands, believe on Christ, 'we establish the law' (Romans 3:31).

Circumcised—According To The Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all the law for us, from the beginning to the end of his manhood, that he might by his obedience unto death bring in everlasting righteousness for us and put away our sins forever, and that he might do so in a way that honours God.

Even as he was coming into the world, our Surety cried, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!' He did the will of God as a man, all the days of his life. When he had done it completely, he cried, 'It is finished,' and breathed out his life in triumphant death. It is by his obedience to the will of God for us as our Surety that we are 'sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ' (Hebrews 10:7; John 19:30; Hebrews 10:10). In Luke 2:21-24, we see our Saviour, Mediator, Surety, and Substitute beginning to fulfil the law of God in the room and stead of his people. When he was just a baby, eight days old, he was circumcised 'according to the law'.

A Symbol Of New Birth

Circumcision was instituted under the law as a symbol of the new birth, that circumcision made without hands by the Spirit of God. The cutting away the filth of the flesh showed the necessity of God's elect being purified by his grace (Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:10-12; Titus 3:4-7). But Christ had no sin. Why was he circumcised? The answer is obvious. He was circumcised as our Surety.

Circumcision identified the Son of God as one with Abraham's seed whom he came to save (Hebrews 2:16-17). He passed by the fallen angels. He passed Adam's seed. He took hold of Abraham's seed, to save Abraham's seed, God's elect, his covenant people.

Understand this. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to save Adam's race. He did not die to redeem Adam's race. He did not fulfil the law for Adam's

race. If he had, Adam's race would be saved. Christ took hold of Abraham's seed, came to save, died for, and fulfilled all the law for Abraham's seed, God's chosen race, his elect nation, his own peculiar people.

Blood Shedding

Circumcision required the shedding of blood. Here the God-man shed a few drops of blood by a painful act done to him by order of God's law, as a foreshadowing of the pouring out of his life's blood unto death, by the order of God's law, in the most painful, ignominious manner possible.

Debtor To Do The Whole Law

By submitting to this ordinance of the law, our blessed Saviour voluntarily made himself a debtor to do the whole law for us (Galatians 5:3). Circumcision was the legally required pledge of every Israelite that he was a debtor to keep the whole law. Our Lord Jesus Christ, 'by being circumcised', wrote Thomas Goodwin, 'did as it were set his hand to being made sin for us.' Christ hereby obliged himself to keep the whole law for us, and to offer, not the blood of bulls and goats, but his own blood to satisfy the law's penalty for our sins.

In order to save me, the Lord Jesus Christ not only was made a debtor to do the whole law for me, he also was made to be sin for me. The Son of God voluntarily took upon himself that horrible, ugly, vile, ignominious thing which he hates—sin. O my soul, be forever astonished! The God-man became sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in him!

When he was made to be sin for me, he was treated as the obnoxious thing itself, and suffered all the wrath of God due to me for my sin. The Father forsook him. Justice was executed upon him. And when the justice of God had spent itself upon the sinners' Substitute, a door was opened in heaven for sinners, whereby we may draw near to God (Hebrews 10:19-23).

'For Us'

Christ was made to be sin 'for us'. That little word, 'us', is very important. Every time the Bible sets forth the glorious, gospel doctrine of substitutionary redemption, every time the Word of God explains the meaning of Christ's death and the atonement he made for sinners at Calvary, it speaks of his work as something done for a specific people, by which he accomplished the eternal redemption and secured the everlasting salvation of a specific people called 'us'.

The Son of God was made to be sin for and redeemed 'us'—'Us' whom he came to save (Matthew 1:21). 'Us' his church and espoused bride (Ephesians 5:25-27). 'Us' for whom he prays (John 17:9, 20). 'Us' who are the elect of God (Ephesians 1:3-6). 'Us' who come to God by him

(Hebrews 7:25). 'Us' who, walking in the light of the gospel, believe on him (1 John 1:7, 9).

Like all the other blessings of grace, redemption is for God's elect alone. If Christ were Surety and Substitute for all men, then all men must be saved. Had he paid the debt of all men, then none could ever suffer the wrath of God for sin. Justice would not allow it. But that he did not do. Jesus Christ died for us. He died for me, and paid my debt in full. How I rejoice to know that I shall, therefore, never be called to account for myself. I am absolutely safe and secure. Christ has magnified the law and made it honourable for me. He has put away my sin. This sinner, for whom the Son of God was, under the law, made to be sin, can never be charged with sin again (Romans 4:8; 8:34).

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